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QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Rapporteur: Ms. Riitta RESCH (Finland)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 4th plenary meeting, on 19 September 1997, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fifty-second session the item entitled "Questions relating to information" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 2nd and 18th to 20th meetings, on 30 September and from 17 to 19 November 1997 (see A/C.4/52/SR.2 and 18-20).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on Information (A/52/21);[1]

(b) Report of the Secretary-General (A/52/455).

4. At the 18th meeting, on 17 November, the representative of Belarus, the Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report of the Committee and the proposals contained therein (A/52/21, paras. 63 and 64).

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[1] To be issued in final form as Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/52/21/Rev.1).

5. At the same meeting, the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information made an introductory statement, and the representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization also made a statement (see A/C.4/52/SR.18).

II. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS CONTAINED IN THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION

A. Draft resolutions

6. At its 20th meeting, on 19 November, the Committee adopted, without a vote, draft resolutions A and B contained in paragraph 64 of the report of the Committee on Information (see para. 8).

B. Draft decision

7. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted, without a vote, the draft decision contained in paragraph 63 of the report of the Committee on Information (see para. 9).

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)

8. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

A

Information in the service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,[2]

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,[3]

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and

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[2] To be issued in final form as Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/52/21/Rev.1).

[3] A/52/455.

diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process":

(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim, in addition to bilateral cooperation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication[4] of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

B

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Strongly reaffirming its primary role in elaborating, coordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information,

1. Takes note of the report of the Committee on Information;[3]

2. Notes that the Committee on Information was unable to finish its task during its nineteenth session;

3. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information;[3]

4. Also takes note of the report of the Task Force on the Reorientation of United Nations Public Information Activities;

5. Requests the Secretary-General to continue to implement already mandated activities;

6. Also requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twentieth session, and to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, on United Nations public information activities, and on the implementation of the measures regarding information and communications approved by the Assembly;

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[4] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, Belgrade, 23 September to 28 October 1980, vol. I, Resolutions, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

7. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session;

8. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-third session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

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9. The Committee also recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 89 to 90 members and to appoint Georgia as a member of the Committee on Information.